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PARTY POLITICS

ONE OF Patricia's most treasured possessions is a tattered piece of duplicating paper headed 'Maghery Convention' summoning interested members of the minority community to a meeting which, when it occurred on 19 April 1964, turned out to be one of the most exhilarating experiences I had ever known. It happened like this.

When the 1959 British general election was over, there was considerable resentment amongst the Ulster Catholics of all shades of opinion. There existed at that time the Nationalist Party, which held nine out of the fifty-two seats at Stormont, mostly in country areas. They did not compete with the Republicans for the Westminster seats, the reason being that a custom had developed that Nationalists did not contest these; this was so that they would have a free run for their bread-and-butter seats at Stormont, unopposed by the Republicans. In the 1959 Westminster Election Sinn Féin polled about 60,000 votes out of an electorate of nearly 900,000. This was because the people could not be bothered to vote for persons who would not attend Westminster, and for men who were promoting a violent solution to the Irish problem. As well as that, some Sinn Féin candidates were in gaol and there was very restricted help at the polls, and little funds. In the city of Belfast there were no Nationalist representatives. The men there were Harry Diamond—Socialist Republican, Gerry Fitt—Labour, and Frank Hanna—Independent Labour.

The Nationalists were entirely without drive, content to obtain minor favours for constituents from the various Unionist Governments, each running their local council areas, employing 'yes men'. There was one group of people associated with the MPs for whom those who knew them had enormous respect, the Registration Agents. These were the dedicated men who kept the voting registers. They attended

what were called the 'Revision Sessions' where the well organised and paid Unionist officials tried their best to deny non-Unionists the opportunity to vote by querying their right to be on the register. People frequently had to present themselves in person to satisfy the authorities and there was much bickering and argument to secure voting rights.

There was a strong feeling in nationalist circles that unless action was taken quickly to produce some sort of an organisation to articulate the philosophy of Nationalism, the urge towards Irish unity might peter out. As usual the Irish were split into Nationalists and Republicans, and against the one Unionist Party, as it then was, the chance of seats at Westminster was nil. The Nationalists in Stormont secured seats by putting up candidates in underprivileged areas or in areas where there were virtually no Unionists living. At Stormont elections Republicans helped Nationalist candidates and for Westminster the opposite occurred.

Because the Nationalists had no organisation, people had little idea what they were thinking and were not in a position to influence them. The Nationalists disliked the Belfast anti-Unionist politicians for their leftward leanings. Even among the three Belfastmen there was little co-operation. There were ratepayers associations here and there, virtually ignored by the politicians. In Newry and Warrenpoint there were Irish Labour groups but they had no access to Stormont. Charlie Stewart, QC, was an MP elected by the Queen's University graduates, but he went his own way, a very decent man but he had, I believe, no rapport with the other MPs. Young people, of course, regarded the whole matter as a farce!

The Catholic Church was sympathetic to Nationalists because they were conservative and biddable. Very often when Nationalists held a meeting it was run by the local parish priest who dominated most important gatherings such as the selection of candidates for election. Many people, including Patricia and I, regarded this as an unhealthy situation.

I have always felt that the reason the Catholic Church supported and even promoted the Nationalist Party was because Nationalists were happy with very small concessions from the Unionists, and were never likely to have the fire in their bellies to cause serious Unionist upset. One of the

Catholic Church's main concerns in Northern Ireland was the welfare of the Catholic schools. These enjoyed a subsidy of sixty-five per cent of the cost of the buildings, and the Government paid teachers' salaries and sundry expenses like heating and lighting. A Catholic uprising might jeopardise all this.

In the early days of our Campaign we were visited in Dungannon by a mainly middle-aged group of English Catholic laymen and women, who, of course, discussed social justice, but before they left they asked us in a very compelling way to visit the newly appointed Cardinal Conway and, 'before he was smothered in the sycophantic cotton wool of Irish clerical life' to speak to him about the world as we saw it. We thought this would be a good idea since it would allow us to express our reservations about the direct involvement of the Catholic Church in Nationalist politics. To Dr Conway's credit he appeared to move in this direction. We do not claim that we were the only people who approached him about it. When we were with the Cardinal, who was most cordial, we talked about many other matters not concerned with this book. I did tell him that I thought it a social injustice that Protestants in the Republic of Ireland could not have contraception or divorce if they wanted them. This did not go down well!

About this time an important article written by a school-teacher Michael McKeown, appeared in the magazine *Hibernia*. He called for a properly organised Nationalist Party. At the same time a new group, sponsored by James Scott, a professor of dentistry in Queen's University, and by his wife Olive, one of our Campaign members, was taking shape. It was named 'National Unity'. It was unashamedly anti-partition and middle class but full of ideas. National Unity based its appeal, firstly on the need to make re-unification conditional on consent, and secondly, on the need for a united opposition. The notion of the consent of the majority was a recognition that not only Protestants but a substantial number of Catholics were apathetic to the ideal of Irish unity. Any 'New Nationalism' in the province would therefore have to spring from the integration of the two politico-religious traditions and not from the domination of one by the other. This nationalism rejected violence as a means. The hardwork-

ing group gave lectures and held debates. They produced a well-written magazine, *The New Nation*. The National Unity group worked with all anti-partitionist candidates and succeeded in preventing a split in the 1962 Stormont election in the mid-Tyrone constituency, thereby regaining the seat. They continued to press the Nationalist politicians to organise a proper political party and met them several times at Stormont. I must confess I regarded it as naiveté on their part to expect to change the cosy setup. As someone suggested, they would have been given the usual answer, 'Go home and learn Irish and leave the rest to us and the rising Catholic birth rate.'

But nemesis was on the way. There was a television debate between James O'Reilly, MP for Mourne, and the late Mr Brian Faulkner. It was chaired by a slick Englishman called Kenneth Harris, who seemed to me bewildered by what he heard. James O'Reilly was out of his depth. The subject was discrimination and the shrewd Mr Faulkner walked rings around O'Reilly on a subject where Faulkner would not have had a leg to stand on had he been faced by a competent adversary. Like everyone else who saw the programme, we squirmed in our seats. A few days later we were overjoyed to receive in the post a summons to the Maghera Convention. The invitation had come, of course, from National Unity.

The finding of a venue proved difficult for the organisers. In Northern Ireland the Unionists had, and still have, almost complete control over town halls and public buildings generally. The Catholic Parochial Hall in Portadown was secured, then permission was withdrawn. Eventually Maghera Hotel made their ballroom available. Great credit and thanks is due to the Mackle family for providing this service at such a vital time. Sadly, the hotel was later blown up and burned, although this had probably nothing to do with the Maghera gathering.

Although at this time meetings were still well conducted with none of the ill-mannered upsets we had to put up with later, there were great tensions in the air and it required a very efficient chairman to handle the 250 pent-up members of the assembly. We had this in Bill McMullan, a teacher from Ardglass.

People attended from every corner of the North, and most of

the Nationalist MPs and senators were present. Sinn Féin was not. Another teacher, Gerry Quigley, opened a very rousing speech with the sentence, 'I come here out of frustration.'

After four hours of serious and heated debate it was very clear that if the politicians would not co-operate by setting up a proper political machine, then the others present would do it themselves. Almost the only people who supported the politicians in their resistance were some of the Derry contingent as well as Fermanagh and South Down attenders. This did not surprise Patricia and me after our visit to Derry.

The motion, proposed by Michael McKeown and seconded by John Mee was put to the meeting 'that this assembly of persons, convinced of the need for a National Political Front to stimulate the growth of Nationalist constituency organisations, to facilitate Nationalist candidates being selected and to secure adequate representation in all public bodies, decides in conjunction with other Nationalist parliamentary representatives and other MPs who support the National Ideal, to take immediate steps to create the democratic machinery of a normal political party'. This resolution was carried almost unanimously. It was further decided to set up a Provisional Council composed of all existing senators and MPs who supported the national ideal, together with one delegate from each of the Northern Ireland constituencies, with powers of co-option up to a maximum of six. I was chosen for Fermanagh-South Tyrone and Tom McLaughlin for Armagh. An invitation was then made to all existing Nationalist organisations to subscribe to the resolution. A secretary, Miss Maura McFadden, was appointed.

An over-optimistic instruction was given by the meeting that the National Political Front would set about devising a policy on housing, social justice, employment, education, agriculture and relations with the rest of Ireland. I doubted if we would ever get that far.

The *New Nation* supported the proposed policies:

The functions of a small Nationalist Party at Stormont and Westminster must be to ensure that no artificial impediments be permitted to interfere with the national economic and social trends which are forcing the two parts of Ireland closer together. What this means is that the

Nationalists will have to be in a position to answer every Unionist objection to better North-South relations with logic and common sense, but will mean much more than a revitalisation of activity in the constituencies and in Parliament. It will link the Nationalist parliamentary party with the people. It will make it possible for younger and more active nationalists to play a part in politics.

Despite some early objections, it was obvious that the overwhelming majority of those in attendance were in favour of the new movement. Cahir Healy, Joe Connellan and Patrick Gormley supported the plan. Indeed Mr Gormley had previously been pushing these kinds of ideas. He had even been advocating a headquarters in a specific location, also suggesting what was a very daring, even inflammatory idea, a radical left-of-centre party. Eddie McAteer attempted to discredit the motives of the assembly and his image suffered a setback in so far as his claims to leadership of the party were concerned.

Meetings of the Committee of the Provisional Council were held at intervals in the International Hotel, Belfast. They achieved very little. The Nationalist politicians were on the defensive. They contributed nothing. Eddie McAteer and Senator Lennon sat huddled together, Lennon priming his colleagues when controversial matters occurred. I thought that Gerry Quigley at times swung too far towards the Nationalist position, but this is perhaps because of my civil rights black or white instincts. It was this same sort of feeling of right or wrong which would have made both Patricia and me unsuitable for the compromises required for party politics. Thus we never joined any of them. In Gerry Quigley's case he may have been trying to string the Nationalists along and thereby achieve something. Gerry Fitt was strangely quiet. I think he felt overwhelmed with all the green Tory brainpower, as he would see it. In the end the exercise gradually tailed off but leaving enough zest behind to make sure that things would never be the same again.

Because of the Nationalists' practice not to contest seats unless they could be sure of winning, the method by which their candidates were elected was greatly open to question. Since there was no formal party membership, a 'Convention'

was called when the need arose. There was a degree of selective invitation to these affairs. Usually the Registration Agents and the district councillors attended. The Registration Agents had some independence, although, because of the nature of their work, they were usually handpicked by the MPs and not chosen by the people.

After Patricia was elected to Dungannon Council as part of the new-broom policy existing there, she was invited to a Convention in Enniskillen. In fact the Convention was only to decide that the Nationalists were not going to oppose Sinn Féin. She returned to me that evening in a towering rage and horror-stricken that matters had sunk to so low a level. To begin with, the meeting was held midweek, and in the morning, when ordinary working people could not possibly have attended. Most delegates there were old. When a vote was taken, the only two to vote against leaving the field free to the Republicans were the two Dungannon councillors, Jim Corrigan and Patricia.

The new wave obviously had a long, long way to go. Meanwhile, presumably to recover some of their prestige, the Nationalists announced a thirty-nine point 'New Look' party statement 'a policy of progressive Nationalism concerned not only with the present and past but the future'. This was issued on 20 November 1964. At a press conference, presided over by Eddie McAteer, he declared that the Nationalists were going to examine all their sacred cows such as refusing to be the official opposition at Stormont. He talked about 'a new ferment of thinking'. He denied that the National Political Front had any part in the project.

The Nationalists for the first time admitted that partition could end only when the majority wished it. Force, which had been successful in the past, was now excluded as a means. The only way that partition could be ended was by welding existing Nationalists into an effective political fighting machine. This method would win over numbers of moderate Protestants who believed that a United Ireland was in their own interests. Catholics could abandon their old bitter feelings so that the 'two communities in the Six Counties could unite' (to suggest that Unionists unite after calling the state the 'Six Counties' was a poor first step, since the Unionists heartily disliked the term). The Nationalists also proposed

that they should start to help in the running of Northern Ireland. They were prepared to abandon the notion of a Gaelic Catholic United Ireland and mentioned the possibility of a federal solution. These proposals obviously did not fire the people's imagination, since the party, if anything, continued to regress. And there was absolutely no chance that Sinn Féin, whose members always disliked the Nationalists intensely, would fall in with them.

Yet another attempt to form an opposition with Nationalist views was made in the Belfast area. Called the National Democratic Party, its secretary was one of our Campaign members, Séan McGivern. In their preliminary report they spoke of 'the drive for the achievement of unity receiving a setback by the failure of the National Political Front'. The position appeared to have been restored when the Nationalist Party publicly accepted the principle of democratic organisation and invited other members of Parliament to join them in the formation of a united party. The National Democratic Party was launched to contribute towards the fulfilment of this need by creating a political organisation in the Belfast area. The decision to establish the party had the approval of the leader of the Nationalist Party and the inaugural meeting on 7 February gave the Area Council a remit to effect the formal integration of both organisations. After consultation with Mr McAteer, a draft constitution was adopted by the Area Council on 14 March. Then on 6 April Mr McAteer informed the chairman of the Area Council that the Nationalist parliamentary party at its meeting on 6 April had decided not to proceed with the merger, the draft constitution having received little support from the meeting. The Area Council asked for a meeting with the Nationalist Party and when this took place only Austin Currie MP turned up, saying that he was there in a personal capacity only.

Later in 1965, a special conference was convened to reaffirm the twin aims of the party as being the creation of a united as well as an organised Nationalist political party. A resolution was passed re-naming the party the 'National Democratic Party'. It set out to organise the ordinary political machinery. Between 1965 and 1970 six conferences were held and these provided an important focal point for the formation of policy. The conference also elected two governing bodies, the central

council and the executive. The National Democratic Party did not organise in the areas where the Nationalist Party was already prominent, the party being generally restricted to Belfast. There were eventually ten local associations including one in Queen's University. The relatively small membership and middle-class predominance with a vaguely socialist outlook ensured a high level of general cohesion, which at least was an advance on the Nationalists. The party fought two Stormont elections in 1965 and 1969. Only one candidate was successful, being returned unopposed in 1965. It had more successes at a local level. Unfortunately, with no worthwhile parliamentary representation, it gradually faded away.

To sum up, the National Democratic Party, National Unity and the National Party were three groups starting more or less from scratch, all generating waves but at the same time floundering. Nevertheless, keen, intelligent and much better educated people were flexing disused muscles and orientating themselves for what they knew was the struggle ahead.

Three milestones were still to be passed, namely, three Conventions to select Westminster candidates. Then and only then was the minority ready for the formation of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, the SDLP.

The Fermanagh-South Tyrone Election, 1966

The electors of the constituency were thoroughly sick of split votes and 'abstention'. Leading the disaffection were the Registration Agents who had been working especially hard to have the voting registers brought up-to-date. Patricia, after long talks with these men, for whom she had enormous respect, indeed affection, hit on the idea of a 'Unity Convention' to select one candidate. After a few preliminary meetings a Continuity Committee was formed. Immediately after this the Registration Agents set to work booking halls and arranging publicity.

There can be no doubt that the new move was welcomed by almost everyone, including the small Liberal and Labour segments, but not by the Republicans who seemed, at first, unable to handle the situation. The Nationalists also feared the new broom.

Meetings were held in Enniskillen, Derrygonnelly, Garrison, Dungannon, Irvinestown, Fivemiletown, Augher, Coo-

neen, Roslea and Fintona. It was very difficult to find venues for these gatherings. Hibernian halls were our only sources in this Unionist-dominated countryside. Heating and other facilities were frequently very primitive, but this was counteracted by the enthusiasm of the people. I have rarely encountered such a warm welcome as the group of Dungannon supporters received when they arrived at these out-of-the-way places. The praise heaped on Patricia and her fellow urban councillors, especially by the older men and women, who had rarely experienced a political public meeting before, was most gratifying. Anyone interested in becoming the Westminster MP was given the opportunity of presenting his point of view, which was listened to with rapt attention. The only discordant note was struck when once, during Patricia's speech of introduction, Mr Ruari O'Bradaigh and his followers tramped noisily into the hall. This was an exception. Usually Republicans were content to explain their position with some heat. They were politely listened to.

This is a typical example of how the events were run. The platform party consisted of Austin Currie, the Rev. Albert McElroy, Desmond Wright, J.J. Donnelly, James Lynch, Jack Hassard and Patricia. On that particular occasion Paddy Duffy was in the chair. Only Desmond Wright, J.J. Donnelly and James Lynch said they were prepared to stand, if chosen. Patricia started the ball rolling by explaining the method whereby meetings in various places would choose delegates to attend a Selection Convention in Enniskillen. Thirty-five such meetings were held. The Republicans, meanwhile, went ahead with their own Convention and chose as their candidate Mr O'Bradaigh.

The Unity Convention, when it took place, was well run with appropriate Standing Orders. The Chairman was Gerry Magee. Republicans attended and took a full part in the proceedings. All the Nationalist MPs and senators were also invited, and were present, except Austin Currie who had a speaking engagement in Birmingham. The first vote taken was whether to contest the election or not. The result, to contest 131, not to contest 83. As well as Messrs Wright, Lynch and Donnelly, D. O'Rourke had submitted himself for selection as a candidate. Voting took place and Desmond Wright was chosen. He was a Protestant, an old boy of

Dungannon Royal School, who had previously been interned for his Republican views. By profession he was a photographer. There were strong protests from the floor, by Republicans. The meeting then adjourned. Whilst we were relaxing, we noticed that Desmond Wright had been called into an adjoining room by a group of men. After an interval he reappeared, white and shaking. He announced to the Convention that he was withdrawing. At this stage the Republicans left. One of their number, presumably carried away by the rhetoric of the Unity speakers, remained. His colleagues opened the window, under which he was sitting, from the outside, seized him and dragged him out.

The other candidates were asked if they were prepared to stand and all agreed. Another vote was taken. It was won by Councillor J.J. Donnelly of Enniskillen. The meeting was over, we had a Unity candidate, a man of unlimited courage and determination. The hard slog of canvassing for him began. The election meetings were well attended but, needless to say, the Republicans gave some trouble. Maurice Byrne and Plunkett O'Donnell were stoned. We noticed that after meetings were over in the various Fermanagh districts, we were shadowed home by a white motor vehicle. Who it was we never knew, but we could guess.

The Nationalist politicians, including Austin Currie, took no part in the canvassing or helped in any way with the voting procedures, indeed some of the older ones worked against Jim Donnelly who courageously bore insults and abuse from his opponents. During the election campaign the Fermanagh branch of the Northern Ireland Labour Party made a sour and divisive intervention by issuing a statement saying that they had no part in the combined effort.

A noteworthy helper was Plunkett O'Donnell, a building contractor from Dungannon, who was entirely convinced that we were making the correct approach to the election, and that 'abstention' was no longer an acceptable protest. This was important because Plunkett was a Republican who had been interned in the 1956 era. Even when the relatively small amount of republican violence (which, of course, was still too much) had ended, Plunkett, like another Republican, Art McCaughey, was kept in prison because he would not sign

some ridiculous document guaranteeing his good conduct and respect for Unionist hegemony. People like these two men were, and still are, as I see it, in the real republican tradition of 1916. Their approach cannot be compared with that of the present mode with its wholesale murders, extortion and Marxist concepts. If republicanism, in the heady days of the 1966 Unity Convention, could have followed the lead of people like Plunkett how different things would have been today!

The result of the election held on 31 March 1966 was Marquis of Hamilton (Unionist) 29,352 votes, J.J. Donnelly (Unity) 14,645, Ruari O'Bradaigh 10,370. 9,536 people did not vote. Presumably they were mainly Nationalists who wanted to show their disillusionment.

One of my favourite themes, when I attended Unity meetings, was that the person who received the lesser number of votes cast was the one who had split the Nationalist vote. Here the responsibility surely lay fairly and squarely with the Republicans.

The Mid-Ulster By-Election 1969

The events I am about to describe occurred nearly twenty years ago, yet they are as vivid in my mind, and I am sure in the minds of the thousands of Mid-Ulster people, as if they happened last year.

For weeks the *Irish News* had been alternately scolding and coaxing its readers to do something about the multiplicity of potential candidates already in the field. Patricia was approached by various people, including Bernadette Devlin, to hear if she had any suggestions. The prospect was bleak. The constituency is the largest in Northern Ireland, is part mountainous, desperately underprivileged and very republican.

Patricia inserted an advertisement calling a meeting in Carrickmore to discuss the election. The result was much more than she had hoped for. On a snowy night almost 800 people from all over the constituency attended, probably the most representative gathering ever held in the area. We knew at once that the wish was for one candidate. With our hearts in our mouths, because we realised that we were dealing with

an emotional, nationalistic and sensitive people, the meeting was called to order by Dr Charlie Sullivan, Strabane. Patricia was elected chairman.

At this stage what worried the audience was the fact that the Republicans had already selected the abstentionist Kevin Agnew, a wealthy Maghera solicitor, as their candidate. There had been talk that they might withdraw him if Bernadette Devlin were to stand. These were only vague rumours.

I explained how the Unity Convention in the Fermanagh South Tyrone election was operated. It was decided to follow the same method. A Steering Committee was chosen and meetings were to be arranged at the main centres in the constituency, Maghera, Magherafelt, Cookstown, Omagh and Strabane.

In Bernadette Devlin's book *The Price of my Soul* there are several inexactitudes. She says that 'the first meeting [of the Unity movement] was hilarious and disgusting and scandalous'. Absolute nonsense. It was responsible, intense and very serious. The platform party was made up of Kennedy Scott, Free Ireland Party, from Dublin; Austin Currie, MP; Seamus Lavery, Lurgan; Lawrence Loughran, Cookstown; Phelim O'Neill, Joe Cunningham, Patsy McDonald and Michael Cunningham all of Omagh; and Bernadette. Kevin Agnew spoke from the floor. In the beginning there was no Constituency Committee in Maghera. The meeting there was stormy but everyone had their say. The violent intensity of the Republican speakers left us gasping.

Kevin Agnew attended most of the meetings. As we tried to hold the whole project together it was necessary to be most careful not to offend him or his associates. I remember, as if it was yesterday, how Paddy Duffy, the chairman, playing a straight bat at the Magherafelt meeting, refused to be flustered when Kevin declared that he would prefer to see grass growing on the streets of Cookstown than have the British forces there. In Cookstown itself a woman member of the audience told the meeting that she was perturbed by a statement of Kevin Agnew's that he did not want to see factories in Mid-Ulster if the Union Jack was flying over them. Paddy Duggan, one of the convenors of the series of meetings, said that, whilst he did not agree with the absten-

tionist policy, he would support Mr Agnew. I kept thinking that these confused thoughts and cross-purposes were a by-product of an underprivileged community having been pushed into these remote mountainous areas by the British, the Unionists keeping them there. The negro civil rights leader, Bayard Rustin's aphorism summed it all up when he said 'People who feel a part of the structure do not attack it.'

Bernadette's performance at the meetings was sheer magic. The word charisma might have been coined for her. We knew that in the end Republican resistance would be broken down and so it was. At the Unity Convention at Carrickmore, presided over by P.J. Rafferty, the 225 delegates, many of them Republicans, heard him read out a letter from Kevin Agnew. In it he stated that 'in view of the disunity which has been created in Mid-Ulster in recent weeks by the activities of some people from within and outside the constituency, who are intent on nominating a candidate to oppose me—thereby splitting the anti-Unionist vote—with the authority and consent of the Republican movement and the Mid-Ulster Election Committee, I have decided to withdraw from the contest'. Then Austin Currie withdrew, receiving three standing ovations for his action. There were very many tributes to Kevin Agnew. Patricia and I took no further part in the election because this was not our own constituency. Louden Seth, a PD associate of Bernadette's, was appointed her agent. Local committees were formed. One of the most active was that organised by Mrs Betty Noone of Maghera.

Needless to say, Bernadette had some trouble at election meetings from Paisleyite mobs. Indeed, one in Moneymore had to be abandoned, but, true to her fearless nature, she was back the next night when, well protected by police, she successfully addressed the gathering. There was support, in her final meeting at Carrickmore, from Gerry Fitt, John Hume, Ivan Cooper, Austin Currie, Tom Gormley—all MPs, a TD from the Republic of Ireland, the Derry Citizens Action Committee and the People's Democracy.

On 14 April 1969, the Campaign for Social Justice wrote to Mr Harold Wilson thus:

We are having a Westminster Election on next Thursday, as you are aware. People who must surely be associated

with you, because they are carrying your flag, are attacking and ill-treating the little girl of twenty-one years, our Unity candidate, Miss Bernadette Devlin. The enclosed cuttings describe how those contemptible bullies are acting—whether they support the polished O'Neill, or the extreme Craig makes no difference—and it is happening almost every evening. Because you have done nothing that we can see to prevent it, we expect the usual intimidation of Roman Catholic voters in Protestant areas, some will be afraid to go and vote, more courageous ones will have to push their way through menacing Unionist lackeys in the corridors of the voting rooms. Personation officers will be stoned as they leave the Polling Stations. No doubt, too, there will be spurious Unionist votes deposited in the ballot boxes before the voting starts. You and your Speaker's Conference on Electoral Law are well aware of these and other abuses, because we have already told you.

And of course Bernadette won the election held on 17 April 1969, won it decisively, beating Mrs Forrest by 33,648 to 29,437 in a record 91.78 per cent poll. In Carrickmore there was said to be a 97 per cent poll, in Gortin 98, in Pomeroy 95.

The Fermanagh-South Tyrone Election 1970

When this election was called the group which worked in 1966 went into action again. It was not nearly as easy this time. There were a great many more self-assured people, there was greater diversity of thought and the standard of behaviour at meetings had gone down.

As before, the same plan was adopted. The two contenders for the seat were Austin Currie and Frank McManus. The latter was a secondary teacher in St Michael's College, Enniskillen and Chairman of the Fermanagh Civil Rights Association.

The pre-Convention meetings were fewer in number. The Chairman had a very difficult job keeping some sort of order. At one meeting a Nationalist group suggested with rancour that there was a move afoot to launch 'the Social Justice Party'. We immediately denied this ridiculous suggestion.

At the Unity Convention Frank McManus was successful. This time, possibly because he was republican in his views, there was no other Nationalist candidate. He made it clear

that he was a Republican but was an 'attender'. Whilst he agreed that the final solution of the Irish problem was reunification, force would never solve the problem. 'Physical force would only exacerbate the fears of the Protestant majority'. He declared that he would support the British Labour party at Westminster (*Irish Times* 22.6.70). There was general satisfaction with his approach.

The election meetings were, at times, stormy. In Fivemile-town Protestant extremists, furious that at last they were to have active opposition, kept up a barrage of shouts of 'We want Paisley.' Stones, bottles and eggs were thrown at the platform party. Austin Currie, who was present in a supporting role, received a headwound from a bottle, Frank McManus was struck on the face by a stone. Windows in the centre of the town were broken and McManus's car was damaged. The police intervened but were hopelessly outnumbered. After the meeting the candidate had to make a detour to avoid an ambush by a crowd of about two hundred persons. Earlier that evening the speakers were heckled in Augher and Clogher. In Dungannon's Market Square there were about 600 supporters present and 200 opponents. The Paisleyites heckled, jeered and threw stones, pennies and pieces of glass. Windows were broken in Market Square and Church Street. The police had to separate the opposing crowds; several people were arrested.

The result of the election held on 19 June 1970 was a splendid win for Frank McManus who polled 32,832 votes against the Marquis of Hamilton's 31,390. Unfortunately, Mr McManus, after election, did not conform to the make-up of a Unity candidate who was put into the position not only by Republicans but by various shades of Nationalist, as well as some Liberal and Northern Ireland Labour party voters.

It was the time of the Border Plebiscite. Mr McManus expressed himself as totally against participation in it, but some people felt that because the Plebiscite had a chance of removing the Border issue from day-to-day politics, it was a good thing. Abstention from the Poll might be interpreted as a shamefaced admission by the minority that they wanted to remain in the United Kingdom. Without consultation with his constituents, Mr McManus took a prominent part in the formation of Dáil Uladh by joining the Comhairle. He voted

at Westminster against the suspension of Stormont. Again, without consultation, he became Chairman of Northern Resistance, a splinter group from NICRA. Eventually, without advice from those who put him in, he withdrew from Westminster.

All these activities suggested that the ideal of a Unity candidate was no longer attainable. The only method for the future seemed to be to go forward resolutely against all comers, and sink or swim thereby.

The Social Democratic and Labour Party

One evening in the early days of the Campaign, Patricia came home from her Credit Union meeting in what was for her, considering the times that were in it, an enthusiastic frame of mind. 'I have just met someone who has great drive and intelligence. He is the first person I have come across who has the sort of leadership quality we so badly need.' This man, who came down from Derry as a guest speaker to further the aims of the emerging Credit Union movement, was called John Hume.

In those days there was the desire, indeed anxiety, that the awakening of minority political life should be encouraged. The problem at this stage was Gerry Fitt. Gerry had been working hard in Stormont for years, and was an experienced performer whom I am sure the Unionists detested (if the way they kicked, punched, and abused him at election times as he approached polling stations or went in to the count was anything to go by). We were delighted when in April 1966 he was elected to Westminster.

We immediately began to ply him with our facts and figures. He used these to great effect, and what is more, unlike many other MPs at Stormont, he complied with our requests and played his hand as we thought it should be played. There was an odd grumble from some of our English supporters that he was too left wing: 'Get Gerry to be a bit less friendly with the left wingers of the Labour Party, tell him to concentrate more on the Right.' Gerry was operating as best he could. The left wing politicians were the ones with whom he had most in common—and they were interested, which is more than could be said of the Catholic Westminster MPs, mainly Tory, whom we, and I suppose he, had approached.

I wrote to Gerry. I am now looking at the carbon of the scribbled plea I made to him, telling of 'a meeting about to take place of Paddy Duffy, Hume and Currie and perhaps Bernadette Devlin to get a party off the ground'. I told him I thought he could not afford not to participate. I was well aware that, to a great degree, Gerry was a loner, but if the gap between the city and country in Northern Ireland was to be bridged, Gerry had to be included in the new party. Sometimes I feel I pushed him into something to which he was not really suited, and I felt very unhappy when he left the party. But then, he did an enormous amount of good by taking the lead he did and in his work for the party he found a great deal to interest him, and now is a Lord of the Realm (an end point that perhaps some may not approve of!).

It is hard indeed to understand his going. They tell me that towards the end he was a poor attender, even at important party meetings. Once Paddy Devlin resigned he was, in my eyes at least, the only genuine working man's representative remaining. Perhaps the middle-class ambience of the party gatherings was too much for him. I know he resented the SDLP contacts with what he regarded as the high tory politicians down South.

Gerry served the minority of Belfast, indeed all of Northern Ireland, well, and I for one regarded it as a serious reflection on our race when mobs attacked his house, virtually destroyed it, and terrorised his wife and family. Once he had to repel invaders on the stairway of his home with a loaded revolver. Eventually he was driven out of Northern Ireland, mainly because of his intense hatred of violence. This he condemned in a way that did not please everybody. All this must inevitably have soured him.

The New Social Democratic and Labour Party started up with a great flourish on 21 August 1970. In their opening announcement, contained in a large advertisement in the Northern papers, they declared that they would be a left of centre party, and they included in their policy preamble every aim one could wish for in a democratic party. One of their goals was stated thus: 'To promote co-operation, friendship and understanding between North and South, with a view to the eventual reunification of Ireland through the consent of the majority of the people of North and South'. There was no

suggestion of extremism in any of their statements at their opening press conference. They hoped that Protestants would join them.

At the conference table were Ivan Cooper, MP, Austin Currie, MP, Paddy Devlin, MP, Gerry Fitt, MP, John Hume, MP, and Senator Paddy Wilson (later the victim of a sectarian killing). Paddy O'Hanlon, MP, was also a founder member. The new party appeared to work well together and gathered in new members in large or small numbers depending on the drive and dedication of the local MP and his close associates. One fact I found gratifying was that now for the first time, there was the same party representing the minority in operation in the country areas as in the cities. Two hard working and articulate medical practitioners Joe Hendron and Alastair McDonnell, as well as Brian Feeney, were leading members in Belfast.

It is very difficult for an Irishman to approve of all that a political party says or does. I am no exception. When the Campaign for Social Justice was wound up, in our final statement we said: 'From now on, the work of making the White Paper a reality, and of safeguarding the rights of all the citizens in the pluralistic society of the future, will be in the hands of the politicians elected to the Assembly by the people of Northern Ireland.' In other words we expected that our grindingly hard work of publicity and exposure of injustices would be carried on by the SDLP. I could see little sign of this. Most energy seemed to be going into trying to strengthen the North-South position. There were those helicopter flights to see the Dublin politicians, and a great deal of anti-partitionist talk. Executive meetings of the new party were held in Bunbeg, deep in the Donegal Gaeltacht, when they should have been in Banbridge or some other Northern Irish town. A Protestant I knew, and one who would have been a real acquisition, was thinking of joining the party, but at this stage he told me that he had changed his mind. I did not ask him why, because we in the Campaign stressed our non-party stance, and I always avoided party political discussions.

Indeed, profanely perhaps, I found myself saying 'These are merely the old Nationalists with a crease in their trousers.' If the underdog Catholics were to gain their rightful place in

Ulster there could not be the slightest postponement in the pressure for the fulfilment of the reform process. Nevertheless the membership, virtually all Catholic, was growing. Their best leaders had been civil rights pioneers. John Hume himself (the details of his life story can be read in the book by Barry White) became a member of the European Parliament, and travelled the western world promoting the SDLP cause.

There was Austin Currie, probably the least rewarded of all the leaders, who after his Caledon squatting episode, and his initiative in helping to promote the first Northern Ireland Civil Rights march was now known and admired as much in the Republic as in the North. For his dedication Austin was rewarded by having his home attacked over thirty times, often with bombs. His wife Anita was outrageously beaten up by Protestant extremists. Her subsequent superb television appearance with her poor battered face was a milestone in the whole civil rights struggle. Austin's estate agency premises in Irish Street, Dungannon was repeatedly wrecked, probably by the Republicans because he intervened against them in Westminster elections. Ivan Cooper was very active in the civil rights movement, and later in the SDLP. What distinguishes him from his colleagues is that he is a Protestant. Lately he seems to have lost a great deal of his interest in politics.

A somewhat later acquisition to the party was Seamus Mallon. Later he, as well as another experienced local Councillor, Eddie McGrady, became competent Westminster Members of Parliament.

The party's outstanding woman member, Mrs Bríd Rodgers, was in the past its chairperson, then its secretary. An early civil righter, she was a valued helper of the Campaign for Social Justice, collecting statistics concerning the Lurgan area. This was an activity in which she received virtually no help from the middle-class residents of the town. She was a member of the NICRA executive and a senator in Dr Garret Fitzgerald's Coalition. She is one of the SDLP's best television performers and as a local representative for the Craigavon-Portadown area has often had her hands full with local problems.

Although there are some women members, the SDLP is not

the best party to belong to if you are a woman, the educational system in the North being such that all leading SDLP politicians were taught first at a single-sex primary school, then by priests or Christian Brothers, some till they were twenty-one years old. This does not tend to produce ardent feminists. One can detect in them at times an episcopal approach to affairs.

There are now many well educated Catholic women about, far from satisfied by an approach to life confined to *kinder küche kleider*. Women's discreet and measured judgments should play a good part in Irish decision making. Indeed there are some who say that, had Irish affairs been handled by women for the last three or four hundred years, we would not be in the mess, both North and South, in which we now find ourselves.

Nevertheless the minority can count itself lucky in having a properly organised political party to speak for it. In spite of no proper remuneration the SDLP members have struggled on. We will always be greatly in their debt. They have resolutely refused to enter Stormont politics until they have a firm promise of shared power. With this I totally agree. The Alliance party has generally supported this point of view, but at times has vacillated when the bribe of progress to devolution has been offered. This is weakness. Considering the people the opposition parties will have to deal with in the future, only cast-iron guarantees would be adequate.

The Liberal Party

In the early days of our Campaign the Liberal Party was a relatively small group of mainly middle-class people. Its chairman was the Rev. Albert McElroy MA, of Newtownards, a minister of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church. He had unlimited courage and an astringent utterance. He was also a prolific letter writer, never afraid to slate the Unionist Government. In those early days there were few who dared to do this. A favourite axiom of his was: 'Running an opposition party in Northern Ireland is like running an underground movement in an occupied country.' Always prepared to express himself pungently, he described one of our Campaign Newsletters as 'one-sided, partisan and non-objective'—perhaps! He ended his letter to Patricia 'Kindest regards' and I knew he meant it.

One felt that Northern Ireland Liberals trod the middle way so well that they trod themselves out of existence. But not before the sole Liberal in the Stormont Parliament, Miss Sheila Murnaghan, the member for Queen's University, had presented her Human Rights Bill (Northern Ireland) five times during 1967-68 and had it rejected five times by the unfeeling Unionists. Miss Murnaghan framed her Bill taking into account the most modern ideas on community relations in Britain and the USA. The Bill had twenty-four clauses and was a masterpiece of drafting and a headline for moderation in Northern Ireland. As she herself observed 'the Unionists did not trouble to consider it, merely voting it out'. For example, on the fourth time it was presented it was rejected by twenty-two votes to eight.

To offer a commentary on the work of the Liberal Party in Northern Ireland is mainly to list a series of vicissitudes. The Secretary of the Ulster Liberal Association for five years was a Miss Islay Donaldson. She recounted her trials in a long article in the *Irish Times*. Because of her activity in the party the Unionists treated her very badly, the Paisleyites worse. In the end she left Northern Ireland sorrowing 'to leave kindly and hardworking people' and saying that 'without the Orange Order Northern Ireland would be a good and pleasant place to live in'. Another Liberal notable, Stanley Wynne, reported that the Chairman of the Young Liberals in Northern Ireland was approached by 'a person of high position in another party' and intimidated out of office. By 1964 Rev. Albert McElroy still found it necessary to criticise the Unionist Party with recently appointed Capt. O'Neill at its head. 'The new look Unionist Party is a pure myth. The spirit is still "Kick the Pope and Boyne Water".'

In October 1964, four Liberal candidates contested the imperial election. All four lost their deposits. In Fermanagh-South Tyrone the candidate was Giles Fitzherbert. He and his wife, the daughter of Evelyn Waugh, who was expecting a baby at the time, were attacked by mobs, once having their car damaged. The constituency has never had a reputation for liberalism or Liberalism so he had to be content with 6,006 votes against the Unionist Marquis of Hamilton's 30,010. In November 1965, Claude Wilton, Liberal candidate for a seat in the Stormont parliament, was prevented from holding his

meetings in Derry by the Young Unionists. Also, the Unionist, Rev. John Brown, President of the North Ward Unionist Association and an official of the B-Specials, admitted that he had removed Liberal posters in the Waterside of Derry 'in the interest of road safety'. In Derrygonnelly, Co. Fermanagh, Rev. McElroy was met by a fusillade of eggs when he was speaking as the Liberal candidate for Fermanagh-South Tyrone. The party appealed unsuccessfully to Westminster against voting irregularities which were widespread in Northern Ireland.

At the Liberal Assembly in Blackpool in 1967 and again at their Assembly in 1968, there were continued appeals by Northern Ireland delegates for electoral reform and civil rights, with little or no effect.

The Northern Ireland Labour Party

No one has ever suggested to me that there were any skeletons in the Labour Party cupboard. Like the Alliance Party its organisation operates in a way which befits a western democratic political party. It is non-sectarian and has always had both Protestant and Catholic members. Only when a few bigoted members secured control of a local constituency area did Northern Ireland Labour present an intolerant image. In its later years, organisation was good in the hands of Sam Napier who wanted to widen the scope of the party by extending it outside Belfast. When the Nationalists became the official opposition at Stormont in early 1965, the four NILP MPs attacked the decision. Sam Napier thought this ill-advised and antagonisms became so strong that he eventually left the party.

Like the Alliance Party, Labour has never experienced the ultimate test of power. Because both parties have continuously to cope with the fact that they support the partition of Ireland, their scope is restricted. Opinions which please one section displease the other. Simplistically one might describe the Labour Party as a working-class party, while the Alliance is middle class.

Labour's maximum success in the Stormont parliament was eight seats, seven of which were in Belfast. When our Campaign was launched they held four seats, two of which were lost in the 1965 election. Paisleyite anti-ecumenism and

even the absurd Belfast dispute about whether the swings in children's playgrounds should be used on Sundays caused strife amongst the members and reduced their numbers.

It was then that the rift between Sam Napier and some of his associates in the party began. The outcome of the dispute was that, in November 1964, Belfast Corporation, with some Labour support, decided to lock up the swings on Sundays.

In February 1964, William Blease, Vivian Simpson, MP, and Jack Hassard were calling for a points system in housing allocation, for the end of religious discrimination and for a united community. In March of that year in an article in the *Guardian* Charles Brett, the Chairman of the party, pleaded for an enquiry into allegations of religious discrimination. He supplied figures to support his case.

The Annual Conference in April 1965 gave some indication of the varying approaches of Catholics and Protestants in the party. Members pointed out that the twelve Ulster Unionists elected to Westminster the previous October 'were elected on a basis of sectarianism'. Yet the Executive opposed a recommendation from the floor that an enquiry into religious discrimination in Northern Ireland be set up. This was nevertheless passed. The party also approved an appeal to Mr Harold Wilson to include Northern Ireland in the forthcoming Westminster Act to oppose racial discrimination. At the meeting some members complained that the NILP was supporting the Unionists. In that month the Executive sent forward their memorandum to the Speakers Conference on Electoral Law. Among other suggestions it proposed revision of the constitution of the Senate and the abolition of business and company votes. It also called for revision of local government boundaries which it claimed were frequently gerrymandered.

In 1967 the party found itself under attack for considering the possibility of an all-Ireland Council of Labour, and it subsequently asserted itself in supporting Capt. O'Neill in his sacking of Mr Harry West, MP. Getting together with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions in that year, the Party submitted a joint memorandum to Capt. O'Neill telling him that the violence was due to the obdurate Unionist Party.

July has always been a month when Protestants and Catholics are most disunited. Thus in 1968 the NILP would

not support the Nationalist opposition in Stormont in their attempt to have the British Race Relations Bill extended to cover religious discrimination and to apply to Northern Ireland, giving as the reason the fact that Gerry Fitt, MP, had threatened to withdraw support from Mr Wilson's administration if his claims for the Northern Ireland minority were not met.

In August 1971, the Northern Ireland Labour Party announced proposals for a 'Community Government'. This was to be a two-year period of social reconstruction during which Mr Faulkner would lead a coalition administration in which Catholics and Protestants would be represented, using proportional representation to choose members. This excellent initiative unfortunately was not taken up until, when the Tories returned to power, something akin was organised as the Power Sharing Executive. The Dungannon area had an outstanding Labour representative in Jack Hassard. Jack is a Protestant and unlike many pretentious and troublemaking Unionists, was a combatant in World War 2, where he distinguished himself in the Dunkirk evacuation. He opposed every discriminatory act by the Dungannon Urban Council of which he was a member. In December 1965 he contested the South Tyrone seat at Stormont and received 4,862 votes against Mr John Taylor's 8,935. His representatives at polling stations were attacked, the dead were voted for, Presiding Officers co-operated with the Unionists, some even abusing people who were likely to vote for Jack Hassard. He was stoned by Unionist supporters. At the end of 1968 he announced his retirement from politics because of murder threats against him and abuse of his wife and family. The final outrage was when his car window was broken by a mobster wielding an axe, his family being in the car at the time.

This lion-hearted man had the ability to draw support from every section of the Catholic community. On one occasion he topped the poll in the Catholic ghetto ward for the local Council election. It is interesting to note that in retirement he has maintained his good humour and a normal mental approach to life. There have been many cases of courageous Protestants who, in the end, have faded from the scene, their resistance sapped by the almost unbearable pressures from their co-religionists.

The People's Democracy

In the early days of the civil rights agitation Queen's University was shockingly apathetic to the longstanding injustices in Northern Ireland, but on 9 October 1968, the students were so aroused as to organise a march to City Hall, Belfast. They were obstructed in Shaftesbury Square by hardline Paisleyite elements who were holding a counter-demonstration. The police re-routed them and in Linenhall Street a sit-down demonstration took place. Shortly afterwards the most militant activists, amongst whom were Michael Farrell, Eamonn McCann, Cyril Toman, Kevin Boyle, Bernadette Devlin, Loudon Seth and John Murphy, got together and named themselves the 'People's Democracy'. It was noteworthy that, associated with the authentic student cadre, there were strongly left-wing and revolutionary elements having ideological links with the international 'new left'. PD rhetoric was militant and anti-sectarian. 'Creed out, class war in' was one of their slogans.

At a later date two further marches were prevented from going through Shaftesbury Square by counter-demonstrators led by the Rev. Ian Paisley and Major Ronald Bunting. The marches had to be re-routed by the police, and after this they were abandoned and teach-ins held instead. There has always been antagonism against police methods allowing counter-demonstrations to upset properly notified marches. No reputable government would have allowed this ploy to develop.

The PDs were offered the services of the Northern Ireland branch of the Society of Labour Lawyers by Vincent Hanna, a local solicitor. Because these lawyers had close ties with the Wilson Government this was an important breakthrough for them. About twenty-five members of the teaching staff of Queen's University helped the PDs in their work. Extreme Protestants agitated to have all grants of those PD members who were studying at the university stopped.

In a letter written by Kevin Boyle, a law lecturer at Queen's University, to the Taoiseach, they took strong objection to attempts being made in the Republic to link Partition and civil rights in Northern Ireland. They also objected to the Republic's stand on contraception and divorce and to the 'special position of the Catholic Church'. The PD always felt threatened by the Young Socialist Alliance who were fre-

quently troublesome and violent at marches and demonstrations.

The organisation issued a news sheet, the *P.D. Voice*, but their main production was a two-page publication which they termed their 'newspaper'. In both they were declamatory about all the abuses which our Campaign was publicising but combined with this was a good deal of vulgar personal abuse of the Unionist leaders including the 'lousy lawyers at Stormont' and various individual policemen. There was an attempt to woo disadvantaged working-class Protestants. The following groups merited PD disapproval; 'Civil Rights people who had a bit of property and a stake in the country'; Fianna Fail including its 'businessman's club'; its 'hacks from Dungannon'; Charles Haughey and Jack Lynch; Also, Aidan (count the Catholics) Corrigan, Neil Blaney (the Free State's answer to Enoch Powell), the Archbishop of Dublin, Gerry Lennon and Eddie McAteer and the Nationalist Party generally (the lime green Tories), the Ancient Order of Hibernians and McCluskey and his Dungannon group.

Burntollet

On 1 January 1969, just when Capt. O'Neill thought he had won a respite from civil rights agitation, the PD set out on their march from Belfast to Derry. Obviously this was likely to be a hazardous undertaking. There were about forty people leaving Belfast. From the first they were harassed by an extremist Protestant, Major Ronald Bunting. He was an associate of the Rev. Ian Paisley. There was a muster of about seventy of his organisation, the Loyal Citizens of Ulster. These people preceded the march when it set off, and continued to abuse the marchers with obscenities.

At the main bridge in the town of Antrim there was a large crowd, led by Bunting, obstructing the way forward. For hours the police refused to clear a passage, during which time the marchers were abused verbally and some were punched. In the end they were transported by police tender to the night stop, a community hall at Whitehall.

As the march proceeded, the Minister of Labour, as he then was, Major Chichester-Clark, and his brother Robin, a Westminster MP, appeared, noted the police inaction against

the counter-demonstrators and retired without ordering the removal of the Paisleyites.

The next night was spent in Maghera where the Protestant guerilla parties, now out of control, smashed shops and houses in the town. After further delays the marchers set out for Dungiven. By now their numbers had increased to several hundred. Then on to Claudy.

At that stage the Rev. Ian Paisley and Major Bunting held a 'religious service' in Derry in order to mobilise Protestants there. This ended in a riot in which Bunting's car was burned by incensed Catholics.

Meanwhile the Unionists near Claudy were preparing for what was to be one of the most horrific events in British Ulster.

As the marchers approached Burntollet bridge the police warned them that they could not guarantee their safety. Then the Protestants attacked. There were about 300 of them, wearing armbands to distinguish them from Catholics. Rocks, previously positioned in heaps, undisturbed by police, were thrown at the marchers who were then attacked with nail-studded clubs. As the members of the procession, completely disorganised, tried to escape they were kicked and punched, some into unconsciousness. Many were young women and even girls. They were attacked indiscriminately with bottles, iron bars, and staves. Some girl marchers were thrown into the river. By now they were a shambles of weeping women and blood-stained men, and still being abused by Protestants. The fact that there were some marchers lying unconscious on the roadway did not seem to influence their tormentors.

The police were completely indifferent to everything that passed, some chatting amiably with the Protestants. There was no police attempt to arrest the attackers, amongst whom were some B-Specials.

Eventually the marchers arrived in Derry where they were again attacked by Protestants. They were defended by Derry Catholics. Here the police ran amok, batoning Catholics on sight.

Fortunately, television and press were in attendance from the beginning of the march, so that the events can never be denied. This scrappy summary is completely inadequate. The full record should be read in *Burntollet* (LRS Publishers) or the

Irish News of the dates given. Following on Burntollet only a few people were charged with minor offences in spite of the fact that over eighty people were identified from press photographs and television film footage. These people were pardoned in a General Amnesty ordered by Major Chichester-Clark when he became Prime Minister.

As the students returned after the Christmas holidays in 1969 the PD was divided on whether to allow Capt. O'Neill some leeway to fulfil his promises of reform or to continue to march and agitate. Some students were still in hospital as a sequel to Burntollet and others still had bandaged heads after the vicious attacks by Paisleyites with stones and bottles and bricks. There was a feeling among the students of disgust and despair. The more conservative Queen's University students greatly resented Capt. O'Neill's description of them as 'Republicans, anarchists, revolutionary socialists and hooligans'. They took great exception to the statement of Capt. William Long, then the Minister of Home Affairs, that he found a two-hour meeting with Mr Paisley and Mr Bunting to discuss Burntollet 'congenial'.

In February 1969 Captain O'Neill called a Stormont election. The People's Democracy fought eight seats. Bernadette Devlin opposed Major Chichester-Clark in South Derry, Eamonn McCann opposed Eddie McAteer in the Foyle division of Derry, Michael Farrell opposed Captain O'Neill in Bannside. They did badly, obtaining mostly Catholic votes in what were Protestant strongholds. In many areas the candidates had a very rough ride. In Enniskillen Bowes Egan, one of their candidates, was attacked by the crowd. Bernadette Devlin was attacked in both Moneymore and Tobermore. The PD speakers were set upon in Brookeborough. In mid-Armagh Cyril Toman described how at six polling stations his workers were obstructed and attacked.

In spite of the election rout the People's Democracy would not throw in the towel. At a meeting in Lurgan one of their number, a daughter of Paddy Devlin, was knocked unconscious by a blow of a blackthorn walking-stick wielded by a District Inspector of the RUC. They held a protest sit-in in Armagh Council offices on behalf of fourteen pensioners living in atrocious houses at Mill Row, Armagh.

In late July 1969 there was a demonstration in Enniskillen.

Violence occurred and thirty-seven members of the party were arrested. This produced a picket at Crumlin Road, Belfast prison led by Bernadette Devlin.

Events like their 'mock trial' of Fermanagh Council in Enniskillen town hall (Judge Michael Farrell) were calculated to infuriate local Unionists, and, indeed, did so. They held a conference in Coalisland on 1 March 1970 in which the speakers, John McGuffin and Cyril Toman claimed that their membership stood at 550. They then formed branches at Portglenone and Ardboe.

Needless to say the PD never grew into a large political party in Northern Ireland. There was, however, no denying their madcap courage, and by drawing political blood they helped to keep matters fluid. They played an increasing but far from cohesive part in the later stages of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association.

When young militants fail to mature by the time they reach middle age, they can appear rather pathetic. This perhaps could be applied today to some people who were members of the PD.

The Alliance Party

In April 1970 there appeared on television a group of tense, almost distraught men whom we had never seen before. They were taking what was for them a very risky step, the outcome of which could not be even guessed at. They were setting themselves up as a new political party, challenging the Unionist monolith at a time when to do so was at the very least a hazardous procedure.

They projected integrity and still do, although, like Labour, they have continually to cope with the ancient problem of their attitude to the 'border' and the side issues that this problem throws up. They unequivocally favour the British connection.

When the Alliance Party is mentioned one thinks of Oliver (now Sir Oliver) Napier, Robert Cooper (now head of the Fair Employment Agency) and David Cooke (once the Lord Mayor of Belfast) as well as John Cushnahan, Robin Glendenning, Séan Neeson and Seamus Close.

The party claims equal support from Protestants and Catholics. In the beginning their support came mainly from

the defunct Liberal Party, defectors from Labour, and O'Neill Unionists after O'Neill stepped down from the Premiership. Their approach also appealed to some young Catholic bureaucrats and technocrats and their wives who had progressed up the ladder since Britain had intervened in the job allocation procedures.

In their effort to participate in the normal running of Northern Ireland, they attended William Whitelaw's Conference at Darlington in March 1971, their aim being to set up a devolved government. They were joined in this abortive effort by the Official Unionists and Northern Ireland Labour, but not by the SDLP or the Democratic Unionists.

Ploughing the furrow that they do, they frequently raise nationalist hackles. The Derry branch of the party complained that Mr McAteer introduced the 'border' issue at times of tension in the local community; this they described as 'political showmanship which widens the chasm between the factions for the sake of a cheap headline'.

Endeavouring to promote community harmony, Basil Glass reminded his fellow Protestants that 'for every Catholic who marches at Easter more than a hundred of his co-religionists will be staying at home in silent protest against the terrorists.'

Robin Glendenning attacked an inflammatory statement by his co-religionist, the Protestant Dean of Clogher, that 'Protestants will die rather than submit. The people will take the authority and find the means themselves [if the Government refuses to act]'. Robert Cooper condemned the Nationalist civil disobedience campaign, but went on to declare that 'Alliance was pledged to defeat the Unionist Party'. The central executive of the party stated that the withdrawal of the opposition from Stormont was wholly irresponsible.

Expressing such strong opinions on such contentious issues inevitably reduces their mass appeal to Catholics, and it is interesting to note that both political extremes in Northern Ireland rarely attack them either by words or physically.

The Unionist 'Moderates'

Not all Unionists belonged to the 'not an inch' brigade but most did. However, there were honourable exceptions who joined a large number of Protestant clergymen led by Rev. Eric Gallagher in advocating reforms. In what most National-

ists regarded as his milk and water way, Captain O'Neill, too, was a reformer. There must have been few who doubted that he was a well-meaning man. He faced an impossible task in trying to reform the Unionist party, dominated as it was, and still is, by the Orange Order. Resistance to his attempts came to a head at the time of the Stormont election in February 1969. The Fermanagh Unionist Association expelled the Duke of Westminster, the Earl of Erne, Rev. T.H. Stewart and Mr H.S. Porter for supporting pro-O'Neill candidates.

Here are some examples of temperate sentiments expressed by Unionists:

On 7 July 1965, Sir George Clarke, Grand Master of the Orange Order, was a Stormont Senate critic of the choice of Craigavon as the new city's name. 'There are many beautiful Irish names in the area.' Mr Victor Cooke, another Unionist member, said that he 'never had any great enthusiasm for the placing of the New City and he had no great enthusiasm for the name Craigavon'.

Dr Robert Nixon, MP, on 17 October 1966, called for one man one vote in local government elections.

Mr Nat. Minford, MP, stated at Stormont on 3 November 1966 that in his opinion 'it was wrong for a city like Derry, where two thirds of the population was Catholic, that Protestants should control the City'.

Mr Phelim O'Neill, the Unionist member for North Antrim at Stormont, was expelled from the Orange Order in June 1968. On the same day it also expelled Colonel Henry Cramsie who, with Mr O'Neill, had attended a Catholic church service two years before. When the one man—one vote controversy was at its height there were only three Unionists who spoke up clearly in its favour, Miss Bessie Maconachie, Phelim O'Neill and Robert Simpson. Mr Walter Scott, MP, favoured progress but at a slow rate.

The Clifton Young Unionists, Belfast, in November 1968, declared that the reforms 'were too little, too late. The blame must rest fairly and squarely on the shoulders of those members of the Unionist Party who were not only not interested in finding solutions to our problems but for many years have denied that there was a problem.'

In September 1969 Mr Phelim O'Neill, then Minister of Agriculture at Stormont, was on the same theme as the Clifton

Young Unionists, that the basic trouble with the Unionist Party was that they had always done too little, too late. After the war, he said, change should have begun. 'The plain hard fact is that there were elements in the Unionist Party who always resisted change at every turn. I say quite frankly that basically is the fundamental reason why we find ourselves in our present difficulties today.'

Sir Robert Porter, QC, ex-Minister of Home Affairs, was equivocal about the Orange Order in June 1971 when he said 'I cannot in conscience associate myself with their attitude [about defiance of the ban on a march in the Catholic town of Dungiven]'

Dick Ferguson, a former Unionist MP, who resigned from the Orange Order and shortly afterwards from his Stormont seat, said in March 1972, 'Given the right overtures from the South, increasing numbers of Northern Ireland Protestants would come to accept the idea of a "new" Ireland.'

George Forrest, Westminster Unionist MP, was dragged from a political platform and beaten into unconsciousness by a group of Orangemen in July 1967. His crime was support for Capt. O'Neill's inadequate reforms.

Again in July 1967 the Unionist Party whip was withdrawn from the newly-elected Mayor of Enniskillen, Alderman Richard Burton and Jack McAuley of Larne because they attended a Catholic wedding service.

There may have been other moderate Unionists saying moderate things, but their words did not make their way into the files of the Campaign for Social Justice and have to go unrecorded here.